



HOW SCHOOLS CAN PARTICIPATE IN THE FEB. 6 STATEWIDE TORNADO DRILL

Governor Nathan Deal has declared February 4-8 as Severe Weather Awareness Week. During Severe Weather Awareness Week, this year's statewide tornado drill is scheduled for Wednesday, February 6. If there is a threat of severe weather on that day, the drill will be postponed until Friday, February 8.

Before the drill, please review your school's severe weather emergency preparedness plan with teachers, students, and staff. Make sure everyone knows where safe areas are located within the school where students and staff can find shelter during an emergency.

Contact your local emergency management agency to coordinate your school's access to local emergency warning systems. Also, inspect or install a working National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Weather Radio at each school facility.

On drill day, an actual Tornado Watch will NOT be issued by the National Weather Service (NWS). In addition, the Emergency Alert System (EAS) will NOT be activated by radio and television stations.

For drill purposes, please assume that a Tornado Watch is in effect when school begins and do what your emergency plan specifies during a Tornado Watch. At 9:00 a.m., the NWS will issue a Required Weekly Test (RWT) on NOAA Weather Radio. The RWT will be the Tornado Warning for the drill. To determine when the drill begins, you must monitor the display screen on your NOAA Weather Radio to see the RWT scroll. Some NOAA Weather Radio models sound a tone alert for a RWT, other models do not. If your Weather Radio receiver does not sound a tone alert for a RWT, proceed with the drill at 9:00 a.m. Students and staff should seek shelter immediately. There will be no all-clear message when the drill concludes at 9:30 a.m.

PLEASE NOTE: During an actual severe weather event, the NOAA Weather Radio alert tone WILL sound.

Remember: GEMA/Homeland Security does NOT issue severe weather watches or warnings. These alerts are issued by the NWS. After completing the tornado drill, a report should be filed with the Office of the Georgia Insurance and Fire Safety Commissioner at <http://www.oci.ga.gov/PublicEducation/SchoolFireDrills.aspx>. Simply sign in the same way you do for a fire drill. All fire and tornado drills that are conducted throughout the year may be reported online.

If a problem is identified once the report has been filed, GEMA/Homeland Security's school safety coordinators will work with your school to correct it.

Also, we just launched our *Ready Georgia* School Box Toolkit, which helps educate 3rd, 4th and 5th graders and their parents about emergency preparedness in a fun, non-threatening way. Lessons complement the health and/or science curriculum, giving teachers the opportunity to introduce principles of meteorology, earth science and heat energy while helping students take a

proactive role in getting their families ready for a variety of emergencies. You can find the toolkit under the [ReadyKids](#) section of GEMA's Ready Georgia website.

Thank you.

SHELTERING RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SCHOOLS

Please note: If you have any questions about the below recommendations, please contact your area school safety coordinator.

SEVERE WEATHER SHELTERING RECOMMENDATIONS

- The starting point for your severe weather sheltering areas should be a classroom length from the end of the exterior doors in your hallways.
- Avoid any skylight areas located in any of your hallways. Also, do not shelter students under fire extinguisher boxes or electrical panels in the hallways.
- Make sure that you have a sheltering plan for transition times, for classes located in outside buildings or those using activity fields, and for your lunchroom. Check to make sure that students located on ball fields or outdoor classrooms can hear your alert signal.
- Use interior rooms or hallways as sheltering areas. Make sure that you receive weekly Wednesday severe weather test alerts issued by the National Weather Service on your NOAA Weather Radio, and that the radio's back-up batteries are functional.
- Generally, most storms approach from a southwesterly direction, so make your staff aware of this pattern and identify the portion of your building that would be directly exposed in the event of severe weather. Make sure that all your staff, including cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers and office personnel, know where they are to shelter during severe weather events.
- Check with your local emergency management agency regarding the possibility of hosting a severe weather spotter class in your area in order to train several members of your staff on spotter techniques.

TORNADO SAFETY TIPS

KNOW THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A WATCH AND A WARNING

- A Watch is issued when conditions are favorable for a tornado to form. Continue to monitor your weather radio and television. Remind students and staff of what a Watch is and where the safest place within the school is located. Move all students from all temporary or mobile classrooms to the main building.
- A Warning is issued when a tornado or funnel cloud has been indicated by radar or sighted by storm spotter. Take shelter immediately.

BEFORE THE STORM

- Identify safe areas within the school with the help of local public safety and emergency management personnel.
- Make sure that each classroom has a map clearly marking the tornado safety area.
- Develop a system for informing students and staff a tornado Warning has been issued. Using the fire bell can be confusing. Practice tornado sheltering drills at least twice a year, in the spring and the fall. Remember there is a potential threat of tornados throughout the year.
- Monitor the weather radio and television.
- Bolt down all bookcases, shelves and file cabinets. This will keep these items from shifting during severe weather.
- Keep first aid supplies current and convenient.

DURING A TORNADO WATCH, OR WHEN THREATENING CONDITIONS EXIST...

- Move all students from all temporary or mobile classrooms to the main building.

WHEN A TORNADO WARNING IS ISSUED, OR WHEN THREATENING CONDITIONS EXIST...

- Get to the lowest most interior level of the facility, away from exterior walls, windows and doors, and assume the "duck and cover" position. The child should be sitting or kneeling, with his/her hands over the back of his/her head and neck, tucked into a ball.
- Avoid places with high unsupported ceilings and glass, such as auditoriums, cafeterias, gymnasiums and sanctuaries.
- Take roll while moving students to the shelter area.
- Stay in the duck and cover position until the "all clear" is given.

Please note: Due to the unique features of some facilities, special considerations may need to be made based on the facility and/or its occupants. Ask your school safety coordinator for more information.